

The heavenly and earthly ministries of Jesus

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Preacher: Nick Louw

[0 : 00] I wonder if you've ever experienced that moment of realizing that someone you know or you thought you knew is actually far more important than you ever thought.

Have you ever experienced that? Let me tell you an example from my own life. I used to, as some of you know, I used to crew yachts in yacht races from Simonstown.

We used to go out from the Simonstown Yacht Club and go racing in the sea on quite a regular basis. Our skipper, the owner of the boat, he used to get on board a lot of people that were associated with the club who wanted to go for a sail.

He used to get them on board as kind of crew. It was my job to show them the ropes when these new people came on board. It was my job to show them how the boat worked and where they must be and what they must do and what they mustn't do and things like that.

Anyway, there was one time we had a new crewman come on board. He was slightly older, the first time I'd met him. But even though he was slightly older, that didn't stop me from bossing him around a bit and telling him how things were on the boat and showing him what to do.

[1 : 04] And it turned out after a while that he kind of knew what he was doing. He obviously had been around boats before. And he met my standard for crew on the boat. So I was quite happy with him.

Anyway, this was a few years ago. And you might remember in the newspapers that there was this Cape Terrio yacht race. And there was this great storm that happened a few years ago.

And lots of the boats were in distress. And the Navy went out to rescue them. The Navy sent out their corvettes and their frigates and stuff to go rescue these boats. And it was on the front page news.

And I remember looking at the newspaper and seeing on the front page this guy who had crewed the boat with us. And it turned out that he was the South African Navy Fleet Admiral who I was busy bossing around on the boat.

And that kind of explained why he knew his way around boats. And in that moment, the penny dropped. And I realized this guy who I didn't really know from a bar of soap, he was much more important than I thought.

[2 : 04] And it also explained why all the Navy patrol boats steered clear of us when we were sailing with him as well, now that I think about it. Anyway, as we turn to the book of John, which we're going to do this morning and for the rest of this term, it seems that that's exactly what the Apostle John wants us to realize about Jesus.

You see, he wants us to realize that this man who we all think we know, because we've been coming to church and we've gone to Sunday school, we all know something about Jesus, we've all heard something about Jesus, we all have an understanding about Jesus.

John wants us to understand that this man is actually far more important than you even thought he was. That's really the point of his whole gospel.

He wants to emphasize the importance of this man, Jesus. Now, this is the last of the four gospels that were written. You should know there are four gospels in the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

But John, when he wrote this gospel, he knew and had read Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So why did he write a gospel? Why did he write another gospel? You see, this gospel of John is from a very different perspective than the other three gospels.

[3 : 17] He wrote this account to help us to see Jesus from a perspective that people had not yet seen him from. And it's very clear we see that in these opening verses. It's the opening verses of John which help us to get this new perspective of Jesus, which I hope you're going to get as we

explore the book of John together.

And these verses actually introduce Jesus, if you look at them in your Bibles. They introduce Jesus in a way that none of the other gospels do. Matthew and Luke, where do they begin? They begin with the Christmas story that you're all familiar with.

You know, the stable and the wise men and Mary and Joseph. Mark, if you look at the gospel of Mark, he starts even later. He starts his gospel when Jesus is about 30 years old, at the beginning of his public ministry.

But where does John start? Have a look. Verse 1, in the beginning. And not just in the beginning of Jesus' time on earth.

No, he starts at the very beginning. The beginning of all things. In fact, John deliberately starts where the Bible itself starts back in Genesis.

[4 : 24] That's why Adrian read Genesis 1 for us this morning. John deliberately uses the opening words of Genesis, which gives us an account of the creation of all things, the creation of the universe.

That's where he starts to tell us about Jesus, to help us to understand just who this man is. And you'll also notice, as we look at the intro of John, he doesn't call Jesus by name right away.

He calls him, what does he call him? The Word. A very interesting and weird designation to call Jesus. He obviously explains later that he's talking about Jesus.

But again, he deliberately is referring back to something in Genesis. In fact, turn there. I won't even need to tell you where to find it in your Bible, because it's Genesis chapter 1.

So keep your finger, John. Turn to Genesis chapter 1 and look specifically the first couple of verses at how God created what he created, how he created the world.

[5 : 21] So Genesis chapter 1 verse 2 says, Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters, and God said, Let there be light.

And there was light. And we see that God did the same for everything else he made. Verse 6, And God said. Verse 9, And God said.

So creation came into being through God saying things, through God's Word. So God's Word is what caused creation to happen. But now, thousands of years later, we turn to John, and we read, we discover, that this Word that we read about in Genesis, which God used to create everything, is actually a person.

A distinct person. So John chapter 1, verse 1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

So this Word, who is a being, distinct from God, and yet the same as Him, was there in the beginning. And He, notice verse 2, He calls the word He.

[6 : 40] He's a person. Was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made. Without Him nothing was made that has been made. So you see what John's doing. It's very important we understand this morning. In order to start to give us this new perspective on Jesus, He takes us right back to the beginning of the universe, and He tells us, that before anything was made, before any of this, before you and me, before the earth existed, before the universe existed, before the vacuum of space even existed, to put everything in, ready, for eternity past, beyond where you can think.

I mean, try to think back a million, billion years, and try to think back further than that, and think back before anything existed, before light even existed, and think further, further back.

You can't. It's impossible to think eternal, sort of in the eternal realm. But for eternity past, before any of that, there existed this person with God called the Word, who we discover is the same person as the man that the Gospels talk about, Jesus Christ.

And so before John even goes into describing the life and the ministry of Jesus and what He did and what He said, He wants us to get just who this man actually is.

Who this man who walked on this planet, you can actually go to the places this man walked. John wants us to understand that He existed before time began.

[8 : 13] that He's always existed, that He was never created, rather all things were created through Him. So Jesus is not just some historical or religious figure that appeared at one point in history.

Jesus is not just some guy who's teaching we like to listen to on a Sunday morning. No, Jesus is the origin of all things.

He's far more important than we tend to see Him and tend to treat Him in our lives. And it's only when we get that about Jesus, it's only when we understand who He really is, that we can really begin to understand what He did when He was on earth and why it's so important for you and me. Which is what John now goes on to describe. In a very carefully structured kind of poem here at the beginning, these opening verses of John are so deep and so much ink has been spilled trying to explain them and we won't be able to cover everything that is in these first 18 verses of John. But what it is, basically, it's a very carefully structured poem which outlines, first, it starts with the heavenly ministry of Jesus, what Jesus was doing before He came to earth.

[9 : 30] Then it goes into the preparations for His arrival on earth. And then, from verse 11 onwards, it goes into the earthly ministry of Jesus. And what I want us to see this morning is this link between what He was doing in heaven before time began and what He did on earth when He came and walked on this planet.

And so let's look at these two ministries briefly this morning. I want us to look firstly at the heavenly ministry of Jesus. Verse 3, we'll look at again. Through Him, all things were made. Without Him, nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Okay, so as we've already seen, Jesus wasn't just around at the beginning of the universe, but He had an active role in the creation of all things.

We're told all things were made through Him. In other words, Jesus, the Word of God, was the one who made God's will happen. He was like God's executive agent in creation.

[10 : 38] So to, if you'll excuse me, sticking with the maritime analogy, on a ship, you get what's called an XO, an executive officer. You may have seen it in Navy movies and stuff.

You get an XO. He's different, he's distinct from the captain. The captain is the one who tells everyone what to do. The XO, the executive officer, is the guy who actually makes sure that they do it.

He makes sure that the captain's will happens. His job is to execute the will of the captain. And that's essentially what Jesus did in creation.

He made God's will of creation actually happen. He made something come from nothing. Jesus did. He made this universe appear when there was nothing before.

I mean, it starts to make sense now, doesn't it, why Jesus could do some of the stuff that he did? Like, calm a storm just by telling it to stop. It makes sense because he actually created, he was the power behind that storm.

[11 : 44] He was the power behind that air and that wind and that sea. He made it all so he could tell it what to do. It boggles the mind, doesn't it, that this man, this man who was here on this planet was the one who created this entire universe.

It's really difficult for us to get our mind around that and yet the Bible, John very boldly says that's exactly what it was, that's exactly who he was. And so he made everything that exists but more than just making things in this world come into being like planets and stars and mountains and trees and sea and wind, we read on Jesus, and now this is where it really starts to get interesting.

Jesus also caused life to happen. Look at verse 4, in him was life and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines on the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Life. Now life is a miraculous thing. Life is so much more than just a functioning body.

you know, you can use machines to make a heartbeat and lungs pump but that doesn't mean there's life in a body.

[13 : 03] Life is more than that. Life is a miraculous thing. There's something more to life than just mechanics. And science can't ever tell you where life comes from and where life goes when someone dies and why we can't get it back when it's gone.

But the Bible does. The Bible tells us where life is from. This miraculous, mysterious thing called life. Right here in John, we find out that life comes from God's word.

This person we know is Jesus. He is the source, not only of the things that exist in our universe, but the life that makes things alive.

Jesus is the source of that. Okay, so what does John then mean by saying, well, the life was the light? He changes his imagery here from life to light.

What does he mean by that? The life was the light of all mankind. Well, now you see what he's doing. He's starting to explain what Jesus did when he came to earth and how his heavenly ministry

and earthly ministry are linked.

[14 : 13] And so that's what I now want to move on to consider, his earthly ministry. You've looked at his heavenly ministry, what he was doing in heaven, but what is his earthly ministry all about? Well, you see, just as Jesus was the original source of life in creation, John wants us to understand that he was also the source of new life when he came to earth, which John describes as light shining in the darkness.

Light. Now, what does light mean? Well, light is typically used to describe revelation, something that you didn't know before, new information.

Like when we say, I've seen the light, you know, you mean I've discovered something new. And that's how it's used here.

John is saying when Jesus came, he came to give us new revelation. He came to shine light in the darkness by which he was going to give us new life.

Because remember, after creation, we've got to remember this, this is what the Bible tells us, after creation, after Jesus originally caused life to happen, sin came in and death came in and messed up life.

[15 : 33] Not just by making it temporary, but by frustrating the life that we do have on earth. So, life was never meant to end, life was meant to flourish and continue, and yet sin caused life to be temporary, to have an expiry date, if you like.

Each one of us has an expiry date stamped on us, which is sad, which is caused by sin. And even the time we have on earth is frustrating.

It's not what it should be. And so, that is when the world is plunged into what John calls darkness.

But here comes Jesus, the source of life in the beginning, and he comes to this earth to bring light into the darkness, to bring new life where the life is frustrated and where life is perishing.

And he comes to bring this life back through new revelation, through light. So, that's the link, that's what John means there, when he talks about Jesus being the light coming into the darkness.

He brings this new revelation which brings life. Now, if you believe all this, then it's very important to ask ourselves, what is this new revelation Jesus comes to bring?

[16 : 54] If life, if the key to life and living the way that God intended you to live is new, this revelation, this light that Jesus brings, what is it?

What is the revelation Jesus brings which will give you and me life? Well, John sums it up in two words, grace and truth.

Look at verse 16. Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. By the way, that's a better translation of the original.

In other words, before Jesus came, God had already showed humans grace in many ways and through Moses, through the law, through him helping them into the promised land, etc., etc., but nothing like the grace that he has now revealed in Jesus.

Verse 17, for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. And so this is the light, this is the revelation that Jesus brought to earth which brings life where there was no life before.

[18 : 00] The revelation of these two things about God, grace, truth. That is what Jesus has come to the earth to reveal to you and to reveal to me and to reveal to this world.

So how does he do that? How did Jesus go on to reveal these things to you and me? Well, you're going to have to come back in the weeks to come to see how he revealed that grace and truth in the gospel of John.

That's what John writes his whole gospel about, to show us how Jesus revealed this life to you and me. But I'll basically summarize it.

What the whole gospel is about is Jesus dying and rising again. That's what the whole gospel points to. That's where it culminates in. And that is how Jesus revealed these things about God that will give us life.

By dying and rising again three days later. That's where we see the grace and the truth of God in all its glory like never before. We see God's grace in making a way to forgive sinners by Jesus taking their punishment for their sin in their place.

[19 : 10] That is God's undeserved favor, grace, which we can't see and find anywhere else. We see God's truth in the gospel of Jesus.

In Jesus coming to earth and dying and rising again, we realize for one that God is real. He's not just a figment of our imagination and we realize when we see and read this historical account of what Jesus did, we realize that everything God said before in the Old Testament is true. It's not made up. It's not stories. It's not myths and legends. It's true and it's reliable and it's fulfilled in Jesus and God is therefore utterly reliable in everything he says in his word. This word that we have Jesus proves is the most sure thing in this world. The words of this Bible are the most reliable truth that you can discover in a world full of lies and fake news. This Bible is where you find truth and it's where you find grace and it's the only place that you will find grace and truth which can give you life. Okay, so Jesus came to reveal these things about God. [20 : 21] So what? What does that mean for you and me today as we go into a new week, as we go into a job, as we have to face difficulties and the frustrations of this life, what do these two things, grace and truth, change for you?

What do they mean for you in the week to come? Well, that's what John goes on to tell us right at the heart here of this opening poem in his gospel. He tells us the result of Jesus bringing this light to earth.

Look at verse 12. this is right in the middle, right in the heart of his poem. He says, to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. that is what happens when you believe this revelation of God's grace and truth that Jesus came to give. You become a child of God by believing this, by taking it in. You become a child of God. How is that? Well, a child of God, you see, is a child, someone who has a child to parent relationship with God, this most intimate, most dependent, life-changing relationship.

[21 : 39] A child of God is someone who lives in the assurance of God's grace, his forgiveness of their sins, and God's truth, that he exists and that he is reliable.

You can't be a child of God if you don't know and believe these things about God that Jesus came to earth to reveal. And it's only when you truly believe these things about God that you can really have life at all, that you can really live life.

If you don't feel that you're living, if you don't feel that you are alive, if you don't feel that you're experiencing life the way it's meant to be, it's because you don't have these two things, you don't have the assurance of God's grace and truth.

When you do, then you start living. You know, it's just like a human child. A human child can only live properly in security and be happy when they know that their parent loves them and forgives them even when they've messed up.

That their parent still loves them no matter what and that they can trust their parent, that what their parent says is true and what their parent says is reliable and they can rest on it and they can trust it.

[22 : 55] Only when a child has that security can they be happy and well adjusted and it's the same for you and me. True life in this sinful world where we live each day knowing that our own sin is all too evident.

Whether or not you admit it, you know it, you have the guilt of it inside you, living in this world, having life in that situation is only found in knowing and being convinced of God's grace and his truth in Jesus Christ.

Knowing that you are forgiven, knowing beyond the shadow of a doubt that God forgives you and loves you despite your mess ups and that you can trust him in all things and that his word is completely true and the foundation for life.

It is in that knowledge that you will find life. And it is only in that knowledge you will find life in a real relationship with God. That you know that he is there and that he is for you.

And that he has secured your eternal future already. It's only when you know where you're going when you die that you can live this life. properly. That you can have life without fear.

[24 : 03] Knowing that God is in control of all things that happen in your day. And that you can come to him at any time of the day and lay out your burdens and entrust your worries to him and find refreshing in his word because you know that everything it says is true and trustworthy.

That is life. And that is what Jesus came to earth to give you. And yet sadly so many people out there maybe even in here this morning have not experienced that life.

They don't have that life. Because look what else John says about Jesus from verse 10. It's quite sobering words. He says he was in the world and though the world was made through him the world

did not recognize him.

Isn't that so true? We look around the world and we see that it has not recognized that Jesus is the way to have life. Verse 11.

He came to that which was his own but his own did not receive him. Even the Jews even his own people didn't realize who he was. But not all of them.

[25 : 14] Because verse 12. Yet to all who did receive him to those who believed in his name. He gave the right to become children of God. And so you know what this is saying? This verse is saying there are only two types of people in this world.

You can distinguish people in various categories. Age, race, religion, where they live, how rich they are, whatever. But you know what?

According to the Bible, there are only two types of people in this world. There are children of God and there are those who are not. children of God. Only those who believe in Jesus and receive his grace and his truth into their lives and receive him into their lives as you would receive someone into your house.

It's the same word. To receive a guest into your house, you open the door and you let them come in. Only those who have received Jesus into their life, have actually opened the door for him and let him take residence.

only they are given the right to become children of God, says John. Because only they, only those who have believed and received Jesus can know God's grace and truth and experience this life that it gives.

[26 : 28] And so to close this morning I want to ask you two questions. Firstly, do you get it? I think if John was here he would want to know if you got it this morning.

If you actually understood what he's saying here. Do you really get who Jesus is? Do you? Do you get that all of the life you experience, the reason that your heart is beating, and all of the life that you have experienced up until this point came from Jesus?

He is the source of that life. And so he is the only way to experience any kind of life to come and true life, both in this world and in eternity.

Through believing in him and receiving him into your life, giving him the place he deserves as the creator of your life. Have you done that? Have you received Jesus as the person he truly is?

Have you realized who he is? He's not just some historical figure. He's not just some good teacher. He's the very origin of all the life you can experience. Do you give him the place that he deserves?

[27 : 39] If you haven't yet received him and you want to know how, please come speak to me. That's my job. My job is to tell you how to receive Jesus into your life. Please speak to me. Make an appointment. Come talk to me afterwards.

I'd love to just take you through what Jesus said, how you can receive him. And anybody can receive Jesus into their life and experience the true life that he offers.

But then second question, even if you have received him into your life, do you give him the place that he actually deserves? Do you give him the place in your life, the life that without him would not exist?

Do you realize that? Does he feature as the most important thing in your life? And do you give his word in the Bible the place that it deserves in your life?

And also, do you understand that if you have received Jesus, do you understand who you are? John wants us to understand who Jesus is, but he also wants us to understand who we are if we've believed in Jesus.

[28 : 49] Because that means you are a child of God. A child of God. That God has forgiven all of your sins. That you can come to him with the confidence of a child through a father and you can trust him in every circumstance of your life.

Do you live according to the reality of God's grace and truth? Are those things the foundations of your days every day?

The grace and truth of God? Because when you do, when you forget those things, that's when your life falls apart.

And so as we journey through John over the coming weeks and months, I want you to just let Jesus reveal afresh the things that he came to earth to reveal to you and me.

God's grace and God's truth. Be reminded of them as we study the gospels, this gospel of John, as we go through it, as we read the words written on this page, be reminded of what Jesus came to

reveal to you so that you can live in light of them.

[30 : 07] And not only so that you can live in light of them, but that you can then share this light that Jesus came to bring on earth, that you can share it with the people in your life who you know are still in darkness.

Will you do that? And will you join our Bible studies as well, our growth groups? Because what we're going to do is dive into these passages and we're specifically going to talk about not only what they reveal to us, but how we can share that practically with those in our life.

Are you grow as you delve into this word?

Do you want that? Do you want to experience the life that Jesus wants you to experience? We'll come back next week as well and we'll go more into this gospel of John. Let's pray in the meantime.

Yes, Lord, we thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming into this world to give us life. Forgive us for the times that we're satisfied with this temporary and frustrating life.

[31 : 35] Help us to realize this is not life. This world can't give us true life, but you came into this world to give us the life that we can't give ourselves.

Lord, help us to realize that. Help us to live in the light of who you really are. Help us to give you the place you deserve in our lives.

And help us to receive and believe the grace and so that we might live by it each day and that we might go out and be light in a dark world.

We pray this through you and all that you've done for us. Amen.